11 September 2003

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2003

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Andrius **Namavičius** (Lithuania)

I. Organizational matters

A. Membership

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 43/222 B, decided to retain the Committee on Conferences as a permanent subsidiary organ. Pursuant to the provisions of that resolution, in 2003 the Committee was composed of the following Member States: Argentina, Austria, Benin, Bolivia, Congo, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Nepal, Peru, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, United States of America and Zambia.

B. Officers

2. At its organizational session for 2003, the Committee elected the following officers to serve in 2003:

Chairman:
Mohammad **Tal** (Jordan)

Vice-Chairpersons:
Guillermo E. **Kendall** (Argentina)
Mikael **Raivio** (Finland)
Rafla **M'Rabet** (Tunisia)

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3. At the same meeting, the Committee agreed in principle that the Chairman would undertake informal consultations with a view to determining the composition of the Committee's Bureau in 2004.

C. Organization of work

4. At its organizational session (449th meeting), the Committee agreed to follow the guidelines adopted in 1994 and 1995 with regard to consideration of intersessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and to meet, as required, to review proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings during sessions of the General Assembly.

5. The Committee convened its substantive session on 8, 10 and 12 September 2003 (451st through 456th meetings).

6. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management addressed the Committee at the opening of its organizational and substantive sessions. At the substantive session, he introduced the report of the Secretary-General on reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (A/58/213) and the proposed programme budget of the Department for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/58/6 (Sect. 2)).

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/58/194) was introduced by a representative of the Secretariat. The consolidation into one report of all matters of a technical nature, an innovation in 2002, was continued in 2003.

D. Programme of work

8. At its organizational session for 2002, held on 22 March 2002, the Committee had requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 2003 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2003. At the 449th meeting, on 22 April 2003, the Committee adopted the proposed agenda (A/AC.172/2003/1) and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 2004 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2004.

9. In order to provide more relevant advice to the General Assembly, the Committee decided to recommend for adoption by the General Assembly elements of a draft resolution reflecting the substantive discussion that took place in the Committee, thereby facilitating the consideration of the item by the Assembly (see A/AC.172/2003/CRP.2/Add.12).

E. Participation of observers

10. The following States Members of the United Nations were represented as observers: Algeria, Belgium, Canada, China, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Germany, Ireland, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

11. At its 454th meeting, on 10 September 2003, the Committee on Conferences considered the question of participation of observers. The question was given particular attention during the informal drafting meetings of the Committee. Some delegations held the view that the widest possible participation was desirable and that it would be reasonable to allow observers to present drafting proposals during informal consultations. Other delegations held the view that the distinction between

Committee members and observers should be maintained and that a drafting group confined to members would be more efficient and appropriate.

F. Biennialization of the item entitled "Pattern of conferences" in the agenda of the General Assembly

12. At its 454th meeting, on 10 September 2003, the Committee considered the possibility of biennializing the item entitled "Pattern of conferences" in the agenda of the General Assembly.

13. Delegations expressed interest in the idea but thought that the time was not ripe, since the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was in the midst of an important reform that warranted annual monitoring by the General Assembly. Moreover, given the importance and wide scope of the activities in this area, an annual review of the item was considered necessary. It was concluded that the modalities and implications of the biennialization of the agenda item would require further thought.

Conclusions

14. **The Committee concluded that its current procedures should be retained, on the understanding that observers could present their proposals in formal meetings. The Committee welcomed the active participation of observers and also encouraged interested delegations to consider seeking membership in the Committee.**

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Addendum

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II. Calendar of conferences and meetings

A. Matters related to and intersessional departures from the approved calendar for 2003

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/283 A, approved the revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2003 as submitted by the Committee on Conferences and amended by subsequent decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. The calendar was issued as document A/AC.172/2003/2.

2. At its 373rd meeting, on 26 August 1994, the Committee had decided that requests for intersessional departures submitted to the Committee should in future be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

3. At its 379th meeting, on 23 March 1995, the Committee had agreed that proposed changes to the calendar that did not have programme budget implications could be dealt with by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee.

4. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee had decided that requests for intersessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, should be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

5. The requests submitted in 2003 for changes of venue or additional sessions/meetings and the action taken by the Committee are set out below.

Organ	*Request*	*Action taken*
Commission on the Status of Women	To convene one additional meeting on 25 March 2003 to conclude the work of its 47th session. Owing to time constraints on the scheduled final day of the session, the Commission was not able to take action on one proposal or elect the new Bureau for the following session.	Request approved
United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund Committee of Actuaries	To hold its session from 2 to 4 June 2003 in Geneva instead of New York. The Fund has an office in Geneva and meetings have been held there in the past. Conference Services in Geneva were able to accommodate the request.	Request approved
Fifth Committee	To hold two additional meetings of the Committee, one informal and one formal, on 2 and 4 June 2003, respectively, to take action on the draft proposals before it and to conclude its work for the session.	Request approved
Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Small Arms and Light Weapons	To convene its first session in Geneva from 1 to 5 July 2003 rather than in New York from 20 to 24 May 2003. Since some members of the Group were to participate in the meeting of the Open-Ended Group of Governmental Experts of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons scheduled in Geneva from 20 to 24 May 2003, it would have been impossible for them to also attend the meeting in New York. Conference Services in Geneva confirmed that they could accommodate the meeting on the dates requested in July.	Request approved
Committee for Programme and Coordination	To hold one additional formal meeting on 9 July 2003 to conclude its work for the session.	Request approved
Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters	To convene the forty-first session of the Board from 16 to 18 July 2003 in Geneva rather than New York in order to give members the opportunity to confer with participants in the Conference on Disarmament. Moreover, since the Board also serves as the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Geneva venue permits the Board members to be in close contact with the staff of the Institute.	Request approved
Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development	To hold its first session from 17 to 21 November 2003 in Geneva. Owing to scheduling conflicts in the substantive office, the session could only be held on those dates, which fall during the regular session of the General Assembly when services could not be confirmed in New York. Conference Services in Geneva were able to accommodate the request.	Request approved

	Request	*Action taken*
c Group of Experts :rnational ration in Tax Matters	To hold their eleventh meeting in Geneva from 15 to 19 December 2003. The Group of Experts often meets in Geneva to accommodate its members and observers based there, as well as to enable a larger participation at a lower cost.	Request approved
ational Civil Service iission	To hold its fifty-sixth session at FAO headquarters in Rome, rather than Bangkok, which itself constituted an exception to General Assembly resolution 40/243 but had been approved when the calendar was compiled. The venue was changed again owing to concerns of participants about the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome in the South-East Asia region.	Request approved